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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes the breadth, diversity, and significance of the international movement to recognize, prepare, and learn from teachers as researchers from three interrelated standpoints: curriculum improvement, professional critique, and societal reform. A derivative of action research, teacher research from a curriculum improvement stance seeks to improve practice in social settings by trying out curricular ideas as both a means of increasing knowledge of the situation and improving it. Teacher research from the standpoint of professional critique intends to improve the structures and social conditions of practice. The focus of teachers as researchers relative to societal reform is on how schools and teaching are shaped in society and what epistemological views are important for their transformation. The cumulative effect of this work has been to influence the manner in which teachers are perceived as professional curriculum developers and agents of social change. It has also influenced current collaborative research models and school restructuring plans which emphasize "teacher empowerment." Finally, this review suggests that the concept of teachers as researchers is at the center of international attention to reform in wide areas across the educational enterprise: research, teaching, the profession, its moral purpose, and its impact on societies. Forty selected references complete the document. (Author)

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Abstract

This article summarizes the breadth, diversity, and significance of the international movement to recognize, prepare, and learn from teachers as researchers across three interrelated standpoints: curriculum improvement, professional critique, and societal reform. A derivative of action research, teacher research from a *curriculum improvement* stance seeks to improve practice in social settings by trying out curricular ideas as both a means of increasing knowledge of the situation and improving it. Teacher research from the standpoint of *professional critique* intends to improve the structures and social conditions of practice. The focus of teachers as researchers relative to *societal reform* is on how schools and teaching are shaped in society and what epistemological views are important for their transformation.

The cumulative effect of this work has been to influence the manner in which teachers are perceived as professional curriculum developers and agents of social change. It has also influenced current collaborative research models and school restructuring plans which emphasize "teacher empowerment." Finally, this review suggests that the concept of teachers as researchers is at the center of international attention to reform in wide areas across the educational enterprise: research, teaching, the profession, its moral purpose, its impact on societies.

Teachers as Researchers: A Review of the Literature[1]

Sandra Hollingsworth[2]

The international movement to recognize, prepare, and learn from teachers as researchers has come of age in the years since John Elliott's summary in the first volume of the *International Encyclopedia of Education*. The current article, written from the perspective of a Caucasian, female, teacher educator in the United States, summarizes the breadth, diversity, and significance of the teacher-research movement across three interrelated standpoints: curriculum improvement, professional critique, and societal reform. Since all teacher researchers are concerned with action to improve their practices, change the situations in which they work, and understand their practices within the larger society, this arrangement is not intended to be linear or hierarchical. The discussion, instead, is framed in terms of different organizing foci which generate the action. A limitation of this overview is its brevity. Notwithstanding attempts to include examples of teacher research across stances, obviously many excellent sources could not be included because of page-limit restrictions. (Complete citations are available upon request from the author.)

Curriculum/Practice Improvement

This stance on teacher-research seeks to improve practice in social settings by trying out curricular ideas as both a means of increasing knowledge of the situation and improving it. Curriculum research derives from what was known as *action research*, which led to *teachers as researchers* in the *process model*. Finally, the work produced both immediate curriculum changes by teachers (*first-order* research) and observations about teacher research from collaborating academics (*second-order* research).

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[1]This paper will be an entry in the forthcoming *International Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd ed.), edited by T. Husen and T.N. Poslethwaite (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press).

[2]Sandra Hollingsworth, assistant professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher in the Institute for Research on Teaching working on the Students' Response to Literature Instruction Project.

Action Research

The concept of using experimental social science to investigate various programs of social action was popularized by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1946) in post-World-War II America. Stephen Corey (1955) then adapted the concept to improve *school* practices in the United States. Corey's faculty colleagues at Teachers College of Columbia University, worked cooperatively with public school personnel on curriculum projects in action. In the post-Sputnik climate of the late 1950s, however, primary funding went to curriculum projects which followed traditional research, development, and dissemination models. Action research, suspect as "unscientific" in such a climate, became "interactive R & D," disseminating research results through inservice teacher training (Ward and Tikunoff, 1982). Much of that federally funded work, however, supported regular seminars where teachers were encouraged to investigate topics related to their practices. It was the curriculum reform movement in the United Kingdom, however, which first popularized teachers as researchers.

Teachers as Researchers

Lawrence Stenhouse (1983) is credited with developing the concept of teachers as researchers at the University of East Anglia. As director of the Schools Council Humanities Project, Stenhouse came to see teachers' authority and autonomy as a basis for curriculum improvement and innovation. Like Corey, Stenhouse used the scientific method of developing and testing curricular hypotheses but felt that its use to develop replicable results across classrooms was limited; he also questioned the ethical stance of separating the performance from the performer. Stenhouse thus rejected the "objectives model" of curriculum adoption (Tyler, 1949) and asked teachers to engage in a "process model" of curriculum innovation where professional and curricular development became the same enterprise.

Developing the Process Model

Three factors made action research in the process model a viable alternative in the late 1970s and 1980s: (a) the difficulties of disseminating quantitative, experimental methodologies to local and social educational settings, (b) an increasing acceptance of the concept of curriculum as

integrated with deliberation (Schwab, 1973), and (c) a professional and political reaction to the post-Sputnik accountability stance for improving and changing curriculum. John Elliott, a colleague of Stenhouse, emphasized the interpretive-hermeneutic nature of inquiry in this work. Elliott (1991) sees action research as a pedagogical paradigm--a form of teaching. He argues that educational research should be modeled after action research--"a moral science paradigm to which teacher researchers would be the main contributors, rather than those in academic disciplines" (quoted in McKernan, 1991, p. 23).

First- and Second-Order Research

While actual change-in-action is the primary product or first order of curriculum/practice improvement teacher research, first-order changes are also described in reports of the process written by teachers themselves (Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Collaborative, 1984), in descriptions of university level teachers' research on their curricular practices (Lampert, 1989), and in coauthored texts detailing the action of teacher-researchers and academics (Clandinin, Davies, Hogan, & Kennard, in press). Published examples of second-order discussions *about* teacher research are found in outlines of skills needed by teacher researchers (Hopkins, 1985), in discussions of teacher-researchers' cognitive development (Oja and Smulyan, 1989), in descriptions of teacher networks (Smith,Wiggington, Hocking, and Jones, 1991) and teacher research/union collaboratives (Naylor and Coplin, 1992), and in understandings gained from teacher-university collectives (Carini, 1988).

Impact on Curriculum/Practice Improvement

The cumulative effect of this work has changed the manner in which teachers are perceived as professional curriculum developers. It has also influenced current collaborative research models and school restructuring plans which emphasize "teacher empowerment." One of the best examples of curriculum-based teacher research which improved practice and then led to theoretical, professional and structural change is noted in the Bay Area Writing Project. Reports from BAWP extensions across the United States range from first-order summaries (Fecho, 1992) to second-order analyses of project participants' ideological differences (Schecter, 1992).

Professional/Structural Critique

Emerging in the 1980s from the success of curriculum improvement research in the United Kingdom and the United States was another stance centered on improving social environments or conditions of practice through *structural* and *professional critique*.

Structural Critique

Stephen Kemmis and his colleagues at Deakin University in Australia and elsewhere have articulated a model of a critical educational science. They write: "New ideas are not enough to generate better education. Educational practices and patterns of school and classroom organization must also be changed to secure improvement" (Kemmis & McTaggert, 1988, p. 34).

The critical stance of teachers as researchers focusing on desired and possible changes in the educational structures has also been recently noted within the United Kingdom and other countries. Helen Simons (1992) of the University of Southhampton has argued for collaborative partnerships in the teacher-research movement which take into account the practice-oriented views of the curriculum researcher and the structural views of the critical researcher. She points out that reforming schools from the outside cannot work--neither can simple calls for collaboration. The fact that existing structures privilege privacy, hierarchy, and territory within the institution and across collaborative boundaries suggests that structural and professional relationships must change.

Critiques of Professionalism and Professionalization

In the United Kingdom and, more recently, in the United States, Hugh Sockett (1989) has drawn educational scholars' attention to both the need for professionalism in teaching and the professionalization or socialization process by which one becomes a professional. Teacher research is an important part of both processes. Peter Posch (1992) in Austria also speaks to the importance of teacher research for the profession. Posch argues that teacher professionalism involves teacher research on student professionalism.

Preparing students and experienced teachers as critical professionals to challenge and change workplace conditions as well as the curriculum is an important part of a professional/

structural critique (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Crouse & Ritchie, 1992). Feminists involved in teacher education help teachers to develop radical pedagogies or "styles of teaching which help make visible to pupils the structural social inequities which constrain their lives" (Middleton, 1992, p. 18).

Impact on the Workplace and the Profession

Although the preparation of teachers as critical inquirers is not yet widespread, structural and professional changes influenced by this work have been widely noted in new policies for school and professional restructuring. In the United States, California's decision to retain and reshape the state-sponsored mentoring project followed teacher-research investigations into its possibilities and limitations (see Ashton et al., 1990).

Many of the transformative results from the critical professional/structural stance, however, have been far less public and far more personal. The Boston Women's Teachers Group (Freedman, Jackson, & Boles, 1983), for example, met for three years to cope with the isolated struggle of their daily work and to study how their work conditions affected them as teachers. Like other groups who have created similar structures (see Miller, 1990), their professional work was critical rather than curricular: They focused on the creation of conditions under which participants could consider their own interests and develop curriculum innovations.

Societal/Empancipatory Reform

The focus of teachers as researchers in the emancipatory stance is on how schools and teaching are shaped in society, and on what epistemological views are important for their transformation. In some Western industrialized countries, the societal focus came with an awareness of the increasing gap between the concept of democracy and the reality of domination and oppression. Reflexively fueled by the Civil Rights and Women's Movements in the United States, even popular teacher-promoted curricular projects challenging static views of knowledge and societal norms were not free from scrutiny (see, for example, Lisa Delpit's, 1986, critique of the Bay Area Writing Process Model). Two broad areas of societal/emancipatory reform are reviewed here: *epistemological critique* and *the problematization of gender*.

Epistemological Critique

This stance on teachers as researchers developed simultaneously with philosophical critiques of societal positions based on privileged conceptions of knowledge. Jerome Bruner (1985), for example, questions the power ascribed the paradigmatic or "rational" view of knowledge and argues for the power of its antitheses, a narrative view of knowledge. Sandra Harding (1991) questions natural science's position on objectivity as too protective of the power-dominant white, male society. Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule (1986) raise questions about alternative ways of knowing which could privilege some women over others. Audrey Lourde (1984) also critiques societally accepted knowledge and points out culturally diverse ways of knowing and representing knowledge. Finally, many critiques either implicitly or explicitly question the separation of hierarchically powered social structures and inquiry methods (Winter, 1987).

The Problematization of Gender

Kenneth Zeichner (1990) challenges the problematic social and epistemological hierarchy by speaking to the importance of teachers as women in the second professional wave of educational reform. Citing Michael Apple, Zeichner reminds us that "Teaching is not just work; it is gendered work" (p. 366). As Zeichner expresses hope for societal/emancipatory work in the recent press for teacher empowerment, he also offers caution. Zeichner points out that curricular reform missions could be undermined unless teacher research is incorporated into instead of added onto teachers' work.

For the author of this article, the teachers as researchers movement takes on a perspective of feminist praxis (see Hollingsworth, in press). A consciousness of teachers' problematic personal position within society (i.e., most U. S. teachers are women), an understanding of research, an appreciation of teachers' abilities to construct and critique knowledge, and the integration of those features in classroom teaching, suggests that teaching itself is research, and thus teachers are the researchers of educational and societal reform--a position Elliott (1991) had taken earlier from a curricular stance.

Gaby Weiner (1989) contrasts teacher research in the Schools Council Sex Differentiation Project with mainstream professional development (curricular teacher research). Rather than convince teachers of a need to change their practices, gender researchers in the United Kingdom wish to bring about improvements in the social and economic position of women. Similar research is being conducted in the United States (see McIntosh, Style and Tsugawa, 1992).

The Impact of Societal/Emancipatory Reform

Excellent examples of first-order research from the emancipatory reform stance are currently available (e.g., Goswami & Stillman, 1987, Newman, 1990). The publication of such work is indicative of the increasing involvement of teachers in emancipatory work. Further, not only are teacher researchers conducting their own professional meetings but they are also participating at national and international research conferences previously reserved for university researchers. The American Educational Research Association has registered a special interest group on teacher research since 1989. The National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning in the United States sponsored a Teacher Research Institute in 1992. These are but a few examples of how the teachers as researchers movement is generating in societal and emancipatory reform.

This review suggests that the concept of teachers as researchers is at the center of international attention to reform in all areas of the educational enterprise: research, teaching, the profession, its moral purpose, its impact on societies. Some might worry that the political implications of teacher empowerment and societal reform might lead us to a new and unknown world with unfamiliar epistemological and social norms. Others might be concerned that the growing popularity of the teachers as researchers movement will ensure that it becomes yet another form of power and hierarchy inside schools; becomes mandated, measured, and meaningless to actual improvement of practice; or simply becomes a new process for reproducing existing school structures and societal outcomes. The trends found in the literature fail to resolve any of those worries. What is clear is that the movement is part of the larger evolution of society into the post-information age--and that teachers as researchers are no longer marginally involved.

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